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IRCIL employs advocates who have speech disabilities. By employing advocates who have specific experiences because of their speech disability, IRCIL is able to provide peer support to consumers with speech disabilities. We also assist all staff to work with people who have speech disabilities by providing them with simple techniques for communication. For example, helping advocates to feel comfortable about asking callers or consumers to repeat themselves if the words are not understood, or resisting the desire to complete sentences for people who speak slower. To my knowledge, we have never taken advantage of Speech to Speech relay services.

Personally, it's important to me because supporting people with speech disabilities means valuing another human being who has something to say. What that person says may or may not connect with me, but I won't know until I'm able to hear him or her.

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--Operators should tell callers that everything is confidential. Yes. I believe this should be a standard practice.

The service will not be fully utilized if it doesn't feel "safe" for people.

--People with a speech disability need an easy way to reach Speech-To-Speech. I don't know about the accessibility of the service, but it does appear that many people are not aware of the service. This is a marketing issue and not an access issue.

--More people with speech disabilities need to be taught to use STS.

This is really about personal choice. If people are comfortable with communicating without assistance, they don't need to be taught to use STS; however, they should be aware that it exists as an option.

--All these statements also apply to people who use STS on the computer.

The statement related to confidentiality and marketing apply, regardless of the specific technology.

--There should be competition, as that makes STS work better.

I'm generally in support of most services being competitive because I believe that monopolies often lead to complacency and mediocrity.